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ABSTRACT

A system of classifying educational change, focusing on change perspectives rather than on change strategies, is provided in an attempt to increase understanding of issues relating to change efforts in educational settings. The term "perspectives" is used to mean orientations for interpreting, while the term "strategies" is used for methodologies or procedures for getting something done. Ten perspectives for change are examined: (1) critical and radical reform, (2) legislated and mandated change, (3) knowledge production and utilization, (4) institutional planning and forecasting, (5) conflict and institutional politics, (6) consultation and technical assistance, (7) organization development and renewal, (8) training and staff development, (9) individual and self-directed change, and (10) behavioral shaping and influencing. A model for the 10 perspectives and how they relate to change strategies and level of intervention is provided. Assumptions, intended outcomes, and potential issues raised by the use of this model are discussed. An extensive list of references is included. (MD)

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THE PERSPECTIVES MODEL: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO PLANNED EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

Eddy J. Van Meter

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(As a means of organizing the growing and increasingly diverse literature on alternative approaches to planned educational change, the author proposes a classification system which focuses on change perspectives. Change perspectives are viewed as conceptual "frames-of-reference" within and around which individuals organize their thinking, writing, and action in attempting to initiate and manage efforts to bring about planned change in school settings. Ten perspectives regarding school-related planned change are examined and discussed. Assumptions and intended outcomes of each perspective are identified, as are potential issues arising from the use of an eclectic perspectives orientation. Dr. Van Meter is Associate Professor of Educational Administration at the University of Kentucky.)

Over the past several years a number of individuals interested in educational change, innovation and reform have taken a more critical look at issues relating to the purpose and outcomes of planned change efforts in educational settings than has recently been typical. Firestone's (1980) recent commentary on the limits of federally sponsored educational change projects is one example of this more critical stance. So too is Popkewitz's (1982) discussion of educational reform as ritual and myth. The work of Bowles and Gintis (1976), Giroux (1981) and several other writers commonly identified with the revisionist history of American education movement also comes to mind in this regard. Shapiro's (1980) study of the limits of special education reform is yet another example.

While this critical emphasis appears a prominent--perhaps predominant--theme of the moment, it is important to note that the more widely conceived literature on planned educational change also continues to grow at a pace that makes it increasingly difficult for individuals interested in the study of change to remain conversant with all that is going on in the field. One has only to cite a few examples of recent work

EA 017 036

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to illustrate some of the many differing ways in which issues germane to planned change in education are being examined and discussed (Gold and Miles, 1981; Milstein, 1980; Herriott and Gross, 1979; Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982; Van Meter, 1980).

As one means of attempting to bring a semblance of order to this diverse literature, a number of authors have within the past several years developed typologies which permit some categorization of different approaches to change (Havelock and Havelock, 1973; Schmuck and Miles, 1971; Sashkin, Morris and Horst, 1973; Hood and Cates, 1978). One of the more widely recognized change typologies now in use was proposed a number of years ago by Chin and Benne (1969). It classified approaches to change under three major headings: rational-empirical strategies, normative-re-educative strategies, and power-coercive strategies. While most of the recent work on change has not been categorized under the rubrics of the Chin and Benne classification system, at least to this point in time, the typology does continue to be viable. A good overview of the literature on change typologies is provided by Spencer and Cullen (1978).

Recognizing the several change typologies already available, yet another system of classification is presented in this article. In contrast to most of those noted above, however, this classification scheme is organized around perspectives regarding change rather than strategies. By focussing on change perspectives rather than change strategies a distinction is made which may increase our understanding of issues relating to change efforts in educational settings. Perspectives as used here is somewhat akin to Kuhn's (1970) idea of paradigms; they are loosely defined "frames-of-reference" within and around which people organize their thinking, writing and action. Individuals working toward and writing about change efforts typically view the change effort from a guiding conceptual perspective, or some combination of perspectives, with which they are most familiar. Perspectives, in effect, provide an

orientation for viewing and interpreting change-related events and activities. Strategies, on the other hand, are much closer to the idea of methodology; they are procedures for getting something done. Thus strategies are employed within perspectives. Individuals attempting change, and operating from a particular perspective, might use any number of strategies in the effort.

The system of classification presented here incorporates ten planned change perspectives. The ten perspectives include:

* The Critical & Radical Reform Perspective (CRR). A guiding theme of this perspective is a criticism of educational systems as they are organized and operated, particularly in the United States. This is, to a large extent, a critic's perspective. Schools are often viewed from this perspective as being homogeneous from location to location. Proponents of the CRR perspective often take on all of education, calling in many instances for a major or even total restructuring and revision in how learning, teaching, and education take place. Assumptions held by some individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) most schools are enough alike to permit generalized criticism; (2) people will listen to and act upon a rationally presented argument for change; and (3) people in positions to make educational changes will somehow obtain or receive the message of the reformer. (Barrow, 1978; Griffiths, 1973; Rich, 1979).

* The Legislated & Mandated Change Perspective (LMC). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward lobbying or otherwise working for the passing of laws to bring about educational change. The focus here is on the formulation and passage of federal and state laws and legislation which require compliance on the part of schools. Proponents of this perspective often see themselves as working at the level of policy development or court case preparation, and at times do not give detailed attention to questions of implementation, leaving that dimension of change to others. Assumptions held by some individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) people will obey the law; (2) people can and will understand the intent of legislated action; and (3) people generally agree with and accept the idea that legislated action expresses what is in the interest of the common good. (Iannaccone, 1981; Howell and Rutherford, Jr., 1979; McCarthy, 1977).

* The Knowledge Production & Utilization Perspective (KPU). A guiding theme of this perspective is a commitment to the production of educational products which can be used in schools, as well as a commitment to work with schools on the implementation of what has been produced or developed. Proponents of this perspective in many instances see themselves as "creators" of educational knowledge, products, processes, and content which are intended to improve education. While products are typically intended to be useable in a wide range of school and school district situations, there is often a commitment

among proponents of this perspective to modify the product or process in a manner to fit the unique circumstances of individual adopting schools. Assumptions held by some individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) educators are seeking new ideas, information, products, and processes; (2) people will adopt and support changes from current practice and use, if they can be shown to actually be of use; and (3) people can be taught or otherwise learn to use new ideas, information, products, and processes. (Coulson, 1978; Berman and McLaughlin, 1975; Louis, 1977).

* The Institutional Planning & Forecasting Perspective (IPF). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward rational and systematic planning for the future. Proponents of this perspective in many instances see themselves as having technical skills and expertise which can be used to develop plans for the long, short and intermediate future, with such plans usually based at least in part on some kind of accumulated data. The focus here is on obtaining, analyzing, interpreting and projecting information that can be used to make decisions about changes which should be made to more adequately contend with the anticipated future. Assumptions held by some individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) the future can within reasonable limits be planned for in advance; (2) information needed to plan or to make future predictions can be obtained, and will be reasonably valid; and (3) people will support and work toward a planned future. (Cunningham, 1982; Kraft and Padro, 1972; Allain, 1979).

* The Conflict & Institutional Politics Perspective (CIP). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward bringing about change within educational settings through the influencing of internal political factions and coalitions, and the "managing" of political conflicts. Proponents of this perspective often see themselves as being coordinators and facilitators of educational change through the processes of institutional politics. The focus here is on garnering support for an intended or preferred course of action, and applying the use of political force to bring about desired change. Assumptions held by some individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) people will be responsive to authority and power when they determine they need to; (2) actual outcomes of politically induced change will be close or similar to intended outcomes; and (3) people will respond to political decisions relating to change if they view the political system in question as an acceptable forum for making institutional decisions. (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Mangham, 1979; Schein, 1977).

* The Consultation & Technical Assistance Perspective (CTA). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward providing selective consulting services to schools by responding to school system initiated requests for assistance. Technical assistance is usually provided within rather narrowly defined parameters as set forth in a written contract for services. The focus here is on providing assistance to a school system which lacks adequate internal expertise relating to the technical area in question, or for some other reason wants outside assistance. Assumptions held by some individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) technical assistance needs once they

are specified accurately reflect the needs of the organization or system; (2) internal people within the system have the means of accomplishing whatever might be needed to supplement or follow-up technical assistance after it is provided; and (3) the actual technical assistance provided is congruent with requested services. (Conoley, 1981; Mahan, 1980; Sturgeon, Tracy, Zeigler, Neufeld, and Wiegerink, 1978).

* The Organization Development & Renewal Perspective (ODR). A guiding theme of this perspective is a commitment to interacting with intact workgroups to improve both organizational task accomplishment and quality of work life. Proponents of this perspective in many instances see themselves as either internal or external change agents, asked to assist the organization make constructive changes through the use of selected organization development strategies. The focus here is on dealing with the process of change as it takes place within the "real-world" work setting, with particular attention given to the dynamics of workgroup member interactions which may be supportive as well as hindering to the change effort. Assumptions held by individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) dealing with organization-related issues and problems is a positive thing to do; (2) accurate information about the organization and about organization-related issues and problems can be obtained; and (3) organizations can be improved. (Fullan, Miles, and Taylor, 1980; Pajak, 1982; Schmuck, Runkel, Arends, and Arends, 1977).

* The Training & Staff Development Perspective (TSD). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward providing members of educational organizations with structured opportunities to learn new and useful job-related information and skills. The focus here is on bringing about change through an updating of expertise on the part of school staff members to they will be able to use this newly acquired expertise within the context of their job responsibilities. Proponents of this perspective in many instances see themselves as promoters of educational change through a process of staff development. Assumptions held by individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) people can be taught or otherwise learn to do a better job; (2) any resources needed to put new skills, ideas or knowledge into practice will be provided; and (3) people will put new knowledge and skills to use once gained. (Lieberman and Miller, 1979; McLaughlin and Marsh, 1978; Bailey and Braithwaite, 1980).

* The Individual & Self-Directed Change Perspective (ISC). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward bringing about change in schools through the individual, self-initiated efforts of members of the school staff. Proponents of this perspective in many instances view imposed change by others as either inappropriate or unproductive, relying instead on a belief that substantive change can best be accomplished by individuals making their own decisions about needed changes within the unique context of their own job situation. The focus here is on providing resources, support and information to

individuals wanting to make changes, as they ask for and need such assistance. Assumptions held by individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) people will take the initiative to seek change; (2) people can identify and articulate what they want to change; and (3) people will have "ownership" in self-determined change. (Hall, 1976; Finch, 1981; Rogers, 1967).

* The Behavioral Shaping & Influencing Perspective (BSI). A guiding theme of this perspective is an orientation toward changing the behavior of individuals within school settings through the use of techniques associated with behavioral psychology. Although most often thought of as being used with students, behavioral shaping techniques can be and are used to bring about changes in the behavior of teachers, administrators and others within schools. Proponents of this perspective often see themselves as technical experts in the application of behavioral modification and shaping techniques. The focus here is on rewarding, punishing and otherwise systematically influencing behavior in an attempt to move the behavior toward some desired end. Assumptions held by individuals operating from this perspective include: (1) behavioral shaping techniques have enough permanence to be used in school-related change situations; (2) effective rewards in school settings can be identified and can be made available; and (3) applications of behavioral shaping can be made with adults in work settings. (Luthans and Kreitner, 1975; Craighead, Kazdin and Mahoney, 1981; Becker, 1971).

The ten perspectives as presented provide, in effect, a relatively straightforward way to view the diverse literature on and approaches to planned educational change. The classification system also permits the inclusion of some approaches to change which have seemingly not received major attention within previous classification schemes, e.g. the Individual & Self-Directed Change perspective (ISC), and the Consultation & Technical Assistance perspective (CTA). A graphic illustration which depicts the ten perspectives and how the perspectives relate to change strategies and intended level of intervention is provided in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 About Here

The Perspectives Model, in effect, visually conveys the idea that change perspectives are different than change strategies, that particular

change strategies are at times used by proponents of any number of change perspectives, and that all ten change perspectives have implications for intervening at macro, meso, and micro levels of education-related social systems (Hage, 1980).

In using the model to describe a specific planned educational change effort we might suggest, as one example, that an individual initiating a change effort is starting conceptually from a training and staff development frame-of-reference (i.e. the Training & Staff Development Perspective), is intending to employ some strategy for change which is generally considered appropriate to the training and staff development approach, and is intending to intervene at the meso level of a particular school building. The model, in effect, permits a recognition of the conceptual perspective in use, the actual strategies or tactics of change employed, and the intended target of intervention.

As a result of gaining a more inclusive vision of approaches to educational change, as suggested by the Perspectives Model, several questions emerge which might assist in our better understanding the complexities of change efforts in school settings:

1. Do most educators operate on the basis of a specific orientation concerning issues relating to change, i.e. from a particular perspective?

2. Is it possible that persons who adopt an eclectic conceptual orientation toward change are thereby subject to creating confusion for themselves as well as others about such issues as appropriate change strategies and change-related assumptions which need to be considered?

3. Would an individual who understands the Perspectives Model in some detail, and has a reasonably sophisticated understanding of the professional literature relating to each perspective, be better able to manage, facilitate or conduct an educational change effort than someone less familiar with the model?

4. Is confusion sometimes created because individuals working within different perspectives use the same change strategies, but use the strategies in different ways?

Using the model as a touchstone for discussion, these and similar questions arise which might lead us to better understanding planned change efforts in educational settings. We might very well go on to ask, for example, if there is such a thing as taking an eclectic approach to change which is too diverse or complicated? That is, while there may be combinations of perspectives which seem to have a natural fit and commonality, there also may be instances in which operating from a conceptual base involving three or four perspectives is counterproductive! The Perspectives Model, if we use it in this way, may allow us to ask a series of new questions about change and change efforts. Our understanding of change efforts in educational settings should be increased as we ask, and seek to answer, these kinds of questions. Certainly by formulating such questions our degree of conceptual clarity will be tested, and we can at least explain more clearly what we think we are doing when proposing specific educational changes.

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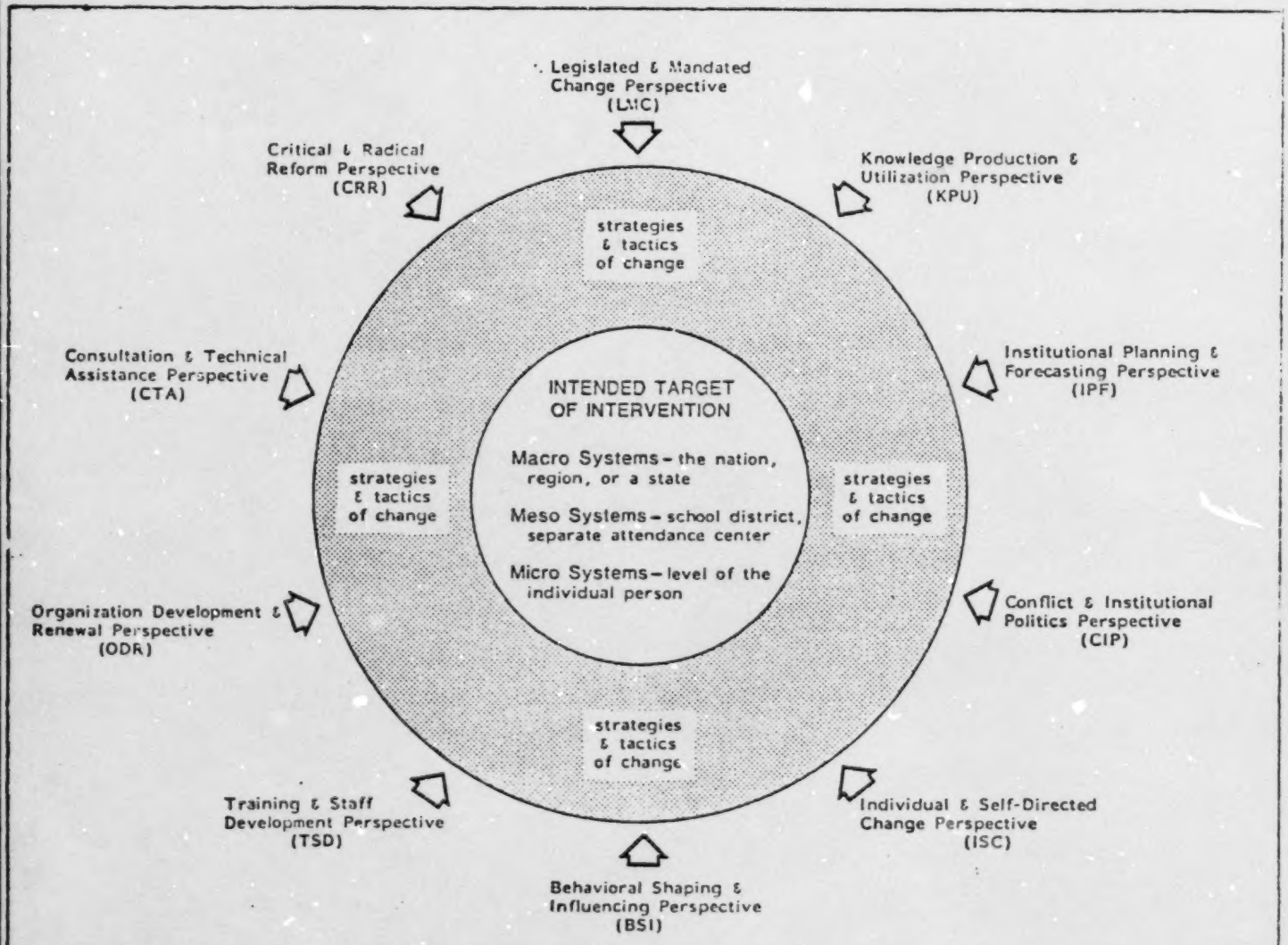
Legislated & Mandated Change Perspective (LMC)
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Critical & Radical Reform Perspective (CRR)
strategies & tactics of change
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INTENDED TARGET OF INTERVENTION
Macro Systems – the nation, region, or a state
Meso Systems – school district, separate attendance center
Micro Systems – level of the individual person

FIGURE 1 – The Perspectives Model: A Classification System for Educational Change Perspectives